

The Defence of Prince Rupert: An Eyewitness Account

DR. R. H. ROY

Until 7 December 1941, British Columbia was remote from the various theatres of war in Europe and North Africa. Canada's naval ships stationed in Halifax and St. John's and at other ports in eastern Canada were active in the Battle of the Atlantic, but those on the west coast were involved in routine patrols. Coastal guns had been installed at Esquimalt, Vancouver and elsewhere as a precautionary measure, but after two years of war none had been fired in anger. Following the outbreak of war, a number of regiments had been brought up to strength and sent to Britain as part of the Canadian Army Overseas. Those that remained waited patiently to join their comrades, and meanwhile performed guard duty at various points around the province and trained whenever the opportunity offered.

Training, even by the latter part of 1941, was not easy to do. German victories in Western Europe were followed by German successes in Russia. Almost totally unprepared for war in 1939, Canada expected to arm and equip her forces originally from British arsenals. After the fall of France, however, the British had all they could do to arm their own forces. Canadian war production was in full swing by the latter part of 1941, but the demands by the three services overseas left little for those at home. Thus in the summer of 1941, on the eve of its departure for overseas, the 5th Canadian Armoured Division was training with 1917 French Renault tanks. The state of training of those units not yet designated for overseas service may be imagined.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour caused a wave of apprehension all along the Pacific coast of North America. In the following weeks apprehension turned to fear as the Japanese scored one victory after another. On December 8 Thailand fell and nine days later Borneo was invaded. Hong Kong, which had a Canadian brigade as part of its garrison, surrendered on Christmas Day. In January Japanese troops were well into Malaya. During February they were pressing back the Allied defenders of the Dutch East Indies and Burma. Singapore capitulated in the middle of

the month, and March brought further disasters. Java was captured in a week, Rangoon fell early in March, and on April 9 American and Philippine forces on the Bataan peninsula surrendered.

It is against this background and the mounting fear that went with it that one must judge the contents of the private diary by Lieut. R. Thistle, the Area Intelligence Officer for the Prince Rupert Defences. Thistle had served in the militia with the Canadian Scottish Regiment before the war and had gone on active service when war was declared. The 2nd Battalion of this regiment, incidentally, had been sent to the Prince Rupert area in July 1941, under the command of Lt-Col. Walter Bapty. A month after Pearl Harbour, Bapty reported to the G.O.C.-in-C., Pacific Command, that his men still had Mark III Ross rifles which had been issued in 1914 to the Canadian Expeditionary Corps. There were no 2-inch mortars, there were insufficient Bren light machine-guns, and the mortar platoon had six 3-inch mortars, four of which lacked sights. The larger mortars, incidentally, had only eighteen high explosive bombs each, or enough for about two minutes' firing. These deficiencies of equipment and ammunition in the Canadian Scottish Regiment were probably matched by the other units, both infantry and artillery, stationed elsewhere in the province.

The new threat posed by the Japanese resulted in a very strong demand by British Columbians for more protection as well as a demand that steps should be taken to restrict the movement of Japanese-Canadians in the province. Lieut. Thistle's diary reflects the wave of near-panic which first struck the residents of the west coast when Japanese bombers and submarines were reported sighted in various areas, when flashing lights appeared to be signalling enemy forces out at sea, and when air raid precautions were taken in anticipation of a Japanese attack. His diary also shows the rapid build-up of the defences in his area, especially in coastal, field and anti-aircraft batteries. By the end of 1942, British Columbia was to have two full divisions available for its defence, and this is not counting those in the Reserves or in the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers.

Thistle's diary, naturally, is especially valuable for its eye-witness account of developments in the Prince Rupert area following the declaration of war. The selections which follow were chosen as being representative of most of the major events which occurred as the military authorities in Ottawa, Vancouver and even Washington began to bolster the defences of the area and build up its capabilities as a major military and naval base. Thistle was in a unique position, as an Intelligence Officer, to report on a situation which developed day by day. He had access to the classified messages which passed over the Area Commander's desk, he attended

most of the conferences held to discuss the defences of the area and he witnessed the rapid growth of the port, as well as Terrace, from Pearl Harbour to the day when the first — and only — enemy shells fell on British Columbia.

DECEMBER 7TH, 1941

Miserable day, with heavy wind and rain. First rumour, which came from the B.C. Police Radio, that Japan has attacked the Phillipine Islands around Manila. This came in around 1030 hours. At noon we heard that Hawaii, Pearl Harbour have been attacked by Japanese Bombers, operating from a Carrier some distance from the Hawaiian Islands. Dutch Harbour, in the Aleutian Islands was reported as being in danger from aerial attack. Received "emergency precaution" (SWORD) warning at 1430 hours. Great Britain and Canada declared wars on the Japs. . . . United States Congress hold an emergency session. Late in the evening it became evident that real war has broken out in the Pacific, with Japan striking while Peace Talks are still going on at Washington. . . .

DECEMBER 8TH, 1941

United States declared war on Japan today, unanimously with the exception of one woman Pacifist. Official word received today at 1135 hours that "War has broken out with Japan." News came in today that the U.S. Battleship "Oklahoma" was badly damaged by fire in Pearl Harbour. These are unconfirmed. Thailand has surrendered to the Japs after a short period of fighting. Guam is reported to have been taken or "blown off the map". Wake Island has had an attempted invasion. Wild rumour this morning that Sitka has been bombed. City¹ completely "blacked-out" at 1915 hours on orders of B.C. Inspector of Police. He evidently received his orders from Victoria, but we have had no official word of it yet. A report in that two unidentified squadrons flew over San Francisco at 2100 hours. The Pacific Coast is completely "blacked-out". Battle Stations (DAGGER) received at 2115 hours tonight from Commanding, Pacific Command.² A report in that about sixty planes came within twenty miles of San Francisco. No bombs were dropped, but planes turned about and flew out to sea. All services stood-to at Battle Stations. . . .

¹ Prince Rupert, at this time, had a population of slightly under 7,000 people.

² The General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Pacific Command was Major-General R. O. Alexander. He received this appointment in October. Pacific Command included British Columbia, Alberta, the Yukon Territory and the District of Mackenzie.

DECEMBER 9TH, 1941

News in this morning that black-outs will be in effect until further notice from dusk to dawn. Vehicles must have "blackout headlights" which is made by covering the light lens with opaque material and then cutting a slit a quarter inch wide by three inches long. Public must ensure that house lights do not cast any beams whatsoever. This will be enforced under the Defence of Canada Regulations. Official word is that we are quite liable to attack. "Sword" was received at 1115 hours from General Staff, Pacific Command. . . . A new report in at noon stating Germany has declared war on the U.S.A. At 1430 a report from Staff Officer, Navy, Esquimalt that multi-coloured engines planes are flying from the north towards Sitka. This seemed to be received from a very reliable source. A news item from 'Frisco reports that aircraft, unidentified, are flying outside of San Francisco. This have [sic] been reported by various guardsmen along the California coast. The RCAF gave an emergency message at 1522 hours that a Japanese carrier has been reported between Hawaii and the West Coast now. Message from Western Air Command that a complete "blackout" MUST be carried out tonight. Definite official information that a Japanese Naval Force is located at Lat. 055° 03' north latitude 170° 45' West, which is just off the Alaska Panhandle. "Dagger" received at 1730 hours. Roosevelt gave an half-hour address at 1900 hours. The speech was a re-hash of what we have heard before, but it was a good reminder of things. . . . The evening was quiet, except for the police who are kept busy checking lights. It is evident that too many cars are running around and it is very surprising the amount of light that the slits in the headlights throw. . . .

DECEMBER 10TH, 1941

A report in this morning that the HMS "Prince of Wales" was sunk by the Japs in the Pacific Ocean. This has evidently been confirmed by the Admiralty. "Sword" received from Pacific Command at 0843 hours. "Dagger" received at 1655 hours. City is "blacked out" again tonight. . . . One officer, conducting, and forty three H.D.³ Other Ranks arrived last night for the 2nd Bn C. Scot. R. (A). . . .⁴ It was reported by a Mr. Dehmel (German), who lives on Digby Island, that a powerful white light

³ "H.D." — Home defence or conscripted soldiers.

⁴ 2nd Battalion, the Canadian Scottish Regiment. This unit arrived in Prince Rupert in July 1941, although detachments from it had been on duty in the area much earlier.

from Ocean Dock and another near the cut-out west of Grain Elevator and one at wireless station on Digby Island, were shining quite brightly last night, another was shining on the hillside behind the Dry-Dock. The four lights were apparently signalling and repeating. This was after 2110 hours.

DECEMBER 11TH, 1941

... At 1225 hours message received that blackouts would be discontinued until warned. "Sword" remains still in effect. Air Raid message "White" received which means no danger of attack from enemy aircraft. Reported at 1500 hours by the Fire Commander that two men landed at Cridge Island, off Digby Island in a white boat. ... Wire received at 1812 hours that guard is to be placed on the Imperial Oil Storage Tanks. The guard will be supplied by the 2 C Scot R, replacements arriving later. ...

DECEMBER 15TH, 1941

... We received a communication from General Staff today stating reports had been received at N.D.H.Q. that French speaking personnel have been forbidden to speak French and there has been no Mass on Sundays. After investigation, with R.C. Padre, Hon. Capt. J. M. A. Monnet, it was found that this was untrue. ...

DECEMBER 13TH, 1941

... Advice received today that 13 other ranks H.D. are arriving on Tuesday nights train for 102nd (NBC) Hy Bty RCA AF. Long distance telephone call from Victoria advising that an Advance Party of 1 Officer, 1 Sergeant and 18 Field Gunners arrive Tuesday 16th for Alliford Bay Defences. Two French .75s⁵ will be the armament, which will be arriving from the South by boat. It was also advised that leave up to 20% of strength will be allowed troops during the day light only. This means the men can come in from forts in morning but must be back before nightfall.

DECEMBER 16TH, 1941

... Noticed this morning in harbour the round-up of Jap fishing vessels.⁶ Heard there were around eighty so far. ...

⁵ French 75-mm. field guns. These arrived without ammunition.

⁶ This was the beginning of a movement which resulted ultimately in the decision to remove all those of Japanese descent away from the coastal area as a precaution against a possible "fifth column" should the Japanese armed forces attack.

DECEMBER 17TH, 1941

.... Two French 75s arrived by CN Boat this morning, on rubber wheels!!!! Four hundred rounds 6-pdr. ammunition will arrive shortly. ... Grain elevator guardsman found one Ross Rifle Mk II No. 424 near the Grain Elevator. ... Started to amend Local Defence Scheme.

DECEMBER 20TH, 1941

.... H.M.C.S. "Prince Rupert" in port today. Has just returned from Honolulu. It left Honolulu two days before war broke out in the Pacific. It is understood that it convoyed the Canadian Troops to Hong Kong.

DECEMBER 21ST, 1941

.... At 2030 hours a guardsman of the Grain Elevator reported Gun Fire in direction of forts, there being three shots a space and then two shots. Barrett [Fort] was notified and sentries there acknowledge hearing these shots. At 2130 hours Capt. Fox, C. Scot. R phoned saying his party of four were evidently lost on trails from F.O.P.⁷ on Digby Island. Capt. Fox and 10 men left at 2200 hours by A.S.C.⁸ boat for Charles Point to look for the above lost party.

DECEMBER 22ND, 1941

.... Mr. Sampson of Port Simpson reported sighting what appeared to be a Pilot House of a boat cruising around the south end of Dundas Island. Navy and RCAF notified at 1240 hours. R.C.A.F. are sending a plane out to look into. ...

DECEMBER 23RD, 1941

.... The report from Port Simpson yesterday was looked into by 2 planes from the RCAF station but nothing could be seen of the boat reported as having been seen.

DECEMBER 26TH, 1941

.... Report in at noon today that the derrick line [at?] Drydock had collapsed injuring one man seriously. Later reports indicated that the newly completed derrick had collapsed at 1310 hours. One man was hurt. Only skeleton crews were on duty. Sabotage is suspected by the Drydock officials. Investigation is under way.

⁷ F.O.P. — Forward Observation Post.

⁸ A.S.C. — Army Service Corps.

DECEMBER 30TH, 1941

.... Consistent rumour going the rounds that a Jap Fleet is out and around Kodiak Island. This is only 480 miles from here. It was later confirmed that submarines have been sighted around Kodiak. . . .

DECEMBER 31ST, 1941

.... Wire received at 1800 hours that signal station here is to have continual communication with Ketchikan, Alaska.

JANUARY 2ND, 1942

.... It was reported, confidentially by the Naval Authorities here, that an enemy submarine (Jap) was sunk off Cape Scott (at north end of Vancouver Island) by a Canadian Corvette on January 1st.⁹ At the same time it was reported that on or about Dec. 27th another sub was sunk off Port Angeles. . . .

JANUARY 3RD, 1942

.... Our observer at Georgetown, Mr. Sandburg, reported a strange boat was seen last evening off Finlayson Island and was flashing lights. . . .

JANUARY 6TH, 1942

.... Schedule of signals was today commenced between our station and Ketchikan, each hour at ten minutes to the hour. It was working satisfactorily. . . .

JANUARY 7TH, 1942

.... Mr. J. J. Little of the ARP¹⁰ phoned at 1645 hours that he had heard there was to be a blackout tonight. It was heard later that a blackout was not to be had, but that Premier Hart¹¹ issued an order that all businesses not occupied must extinguish all advertising lights and unoccupied houses must not have lights showing.

JANUARY 8TH, 1942

.... Although officials do not admit it, it is quite evident now that the collapse of derricks at the Drydock was not sabotage, but was due to faulty construction. . . .

⁹ This was a false report.

¹⁰ A.R.P. — Air Raid Precautions.

¹¹ The Hon. John Hart, Premier of British Columbia.

JANUARY 13TH, 1942

.... Water reservoir in town was evidently tampered with. The barbed wire has been broken and watchman noticed a flashlight bobbing around the reservoir last night. The reservoir was drained this afternoon.

JANUARY 14TH, 1942

.... An American Transport, the "David W. Branch", went aground on Hammer Island, in Arthur Passage this morning. . . . 133 civilians (Men) were brought into town on three Naval Boats. We are supplying them with beds and bedding and arrangements are being made to house them in the YMCA Hut. . . . (There were 350 passengers aboard the David W. Branch, 133 civilian workmen for Alaska projects and remainder were troops. The troops stayed aboard the boat.)

JANUARY 16TH, 1942

.... At 0915 hours, Capt. A. B. Grey, Barrett Battery, advised that lookouts located what appeared to be two submarines on surface moving north off the north end of Lawyer Island — visibility only fair — Battery "Standing To". Naval and Air Force H.Q. contacted and they advised that two American Submarines escorted by the S.S. "Eli D. Hoyle" were expected about this time, en route to Alaska. . . . Submarines were properly identified by the R.C.A.F. Battery advised and ordered to "Stand Down" at 0950 hours (approx.). These subs were proceeding on a course which was between 12000 and 13000 yards from Barrett. Nothing much could have been done by Barrett even if they had been hostile craft. . . .

JANUARY 17TH, 1942

.... At 1630 hours word was received that the "David W. Branch" was not safe and that the remaining troops on board were to be brought into Rupert on the Coast Guard Cutter "Hemlock". We have been asked to quarter and ration them. . . .

JANUARY 18TH, 1942

.... Due to the precarious position of the wrecked transport it was reported that all supplies, ammunition, guns and MT¹² equipment is being brought in, to be stored at the Ocean Dock and the Grain Elevator warehouse. All troops were brought in tonight, as well as some of the superfluous crew. This makes a total of 10 officers and 180 O.R.'s including Lt.-Col. Fred Adams of the 32 U.S. Inf.

¹² M.T. — Motor Transport.

JANUARY 20TH, 1942

... Area I.O. (In case the Reader doesn't know it, that's ME) was advised at 0130 hours (21st Jan) that the Barbed Wire Entanglement around the Water Reservoir was cut again. (It was later established that the watchman himself had done this to attempt to force the authorities hands to give him a gun, as it is known he is quite nervous).

JANUARY 23RD, 1942

... Tons of material continues to be brought in from the wrecked transport "David W. Branch". U.S. troops are at the boat loading scows and we supplied 20 O.R.'s from the 2nd Bn Scottish to assist unloading at Ocean Dock on account of shortage of labour. ...

JANUARY 26TH, 1942

... A report received today that 500 cars of U.S. freight will be coming in by rail and 150 longshoremen are to be employed. ...

JANUARY 29TH, 1942

... A.R.P. workers were out testing their fire fighting equipment today. Air Raid Sirens are now installed and it is expected shortly that the Remote Control Buttons will be placed at this Headquarters. A 2/3 charge 6"-inch practice night shoot was held from Barrett between 2000 hrs. and 2300 hours. This is the first night shoot of heavy guns held on the Pacific Coast with lights. ...

JANUARY 31ST, 1942

... Lt.-Col. F. Adams, 32 US Inf. and C.O.¹³ are scouting town for a suitable place to house, or construct housing, for approximately 2 stevedoring coys, 1 guard coy and 1 miscellaneous coy of American Troops who will be employed when U.S. Freight is brought in by rail for trans-shipment to Alaska Points. ...

FEBRUARY 1ST, 1942

... G.S.O. I¹⁴ Pacific Command advises by letter that Prince Rupert is to be tested by the U.S. Navy as a secondary port of embarkation for

¹³ C.O. — Commanding Officer. The C.O. of the Prince Rupert Defences at this time was Colonel S. D. Johnston, MC, VD.

¹⁴ G.S.O. I — General Staff Officer, Grade I.

supplies, etc. to South Eastern Alaska. The results of this test will decide the establishment or non-establishment of Prince Rupert as a secondary port of embarkation.

FEBRUARY 5TH, 1942

. . . . At 2300 hours Lieut. R. Thistle and Major J. C. Dow returned from their recce Terrace to Smithers.¹⁵

FEBRUARY 8TH, 1942

. . . . At 1500 hours the Air Raid Sirens were tested and worked satisfactorily. They were not heard very well in some parts of the city.

FEBRUARY 15TH, 1942

. . . . Wire received from G.S. Pacific Command that inter-racial riots may occur in consequence of rumours from Hong Kong and for us to be prepared.

FEBRUARY 18TH, 1942

. . . . At 1208 hours Mr. J. J. Little, Manager of the North B.C. Power Co., reported that Japs at Brown's Mill and Port Essington have been discussing plans to blow up the North BC Power plant at Fall's River. Wired this info to G.S.O. 2 (Int)¹⁶ Pacific Command. . . .

FEBRUARY 25TH, 1942

. . . . Lt. R. Thistle, Major W. G. Swan and Capt. Houseley left for Terrace to examine the proposed camp site. It is estimated that the camp will cost a quarter of a million dollars. D.E.O.¹⁷ advises us that the road to Terrace is to built immediately.

FEBRUARY 26TH, 1942

. . . . Site for camp at Terrace has been approved and recommended.

¹⁵ Lieut. Thistle and Major J. C. Dow of the 2nd Bn., Canadian Scottish Regiment, had been ordered to select a suitable location to accommodate an infantry battalion in event of an emergency and the site for a permanent camp. After making a reconnaissance of Terrace, Usk, Pacific, Cedarville, Skeena Crossing, Hazelton and Smithers, they recommended Terrace, a small (300 population) village about 100 miles inland from Prince Rupert on the Skeena River. Terrace, ultimately, was to be the site for an entire brigade.

¹⁶ G.S.O. 2 (Int) — General Staff Officer, Grade II (Intelligence).

¹⁷ D.E.O. — District Engineer Officer.

FEBRUARY 27TH, 1942

.... Col. Allen, AA & Q¹⁸ phoned CO.¹⁹ to inform that 2 Bofors²⁰ guns with crews are arriving. . . .

MARCH 2ND, 1942

.... At 1530 hours CO had a phone call from HQ PC stating the 77 AA personnel have left for here and will most likely arrive Saturday next. . . .

MARCH 3RD, 1942

.... At 2200 hours a wire was received from GS PC²¹ that two Bofors are being shipped here immediately. To be sited to cover the Drydock.

MARCH 4TH, 1942

.... At 2220 hours Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet issued alert warning to entire Pacific Coast covering period fourth and fifth of March.

MARCH 5TH, 1942

.... Our Signals station picked up messages from Steamships in Alaskan waters that tri-motored planes were heard over Alaska last night and they have a suspicion that there is an aircraft carrier in the Alaskan waters.

MARCH 8TH, 1942

.... At 0130 hours Three officers (Capt. Farnsworth, Lieuts. Sine and McLaren) and 81 ORs of the 112th L.A.A. Bty. 6 Cdn. AA Regt. arrived via CNR to man the AA guns which have not yet arrived. . . .

MARCH 11TH, 1942

.... The R.C.M.P. advises us that 32 to 40 Japs Nationals leave on tomorrows boat for Vancouver. It is expected that all Japs will be out of the Area within the next two weeks.

MARCH 12TH, 1942

.... At 1045 hours W.A.C.²² advised their Station here that an un-

¹⁸ A.A. & Q. — Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General.

¹⁹ C.O. — Commanding Officer.

²⁰ Bofors — The Bofors 40-mm. anti-aircraft gun.

²¹ G.S.P.C. — General Staff, Pacific Command.

²² W.A.C. — Western Air Command.

identified plane had flown over Rosewood, B.C. and we were asked to identify the Bugger if possible. At 2300 hours 31 Jap Nationals left for Vancouver.

MARCH 15TH, 1942

.... Remainder of American troops from the UST²³ "David W. Branch" left for Alaska. The Americans have hired civilian guards to look after their supplies here.

MARCH 16TH, 1942

.... At 0155 hours a wire was received from Cmdg.²⁴ PC that an Inf. Bn. is to be posted here as Protection for CNR from Terrace to Prince Rupert. A Bty of Fld²⁵ Guns is also to be stationed here. At 1930 hours a wire was received from OO XI²⁶ that ammunition, etc. for Bofors would arrive here next Friday. At 2000 hours CO held meeting of Navy, Air Force and Messrs. Mechin and Gordon Bell of Imperial Oil. They are studying proposed defence of their oil reserves here. . . .

MARCH 19TH, 1942

.... At 0815 hours a wire was received from Prairie Command that 8" guns will arrive on the 21st instant, complete with ammunition car, Fire Control Car and all necessary equipment. A guard accompanies the equipment which is coming from Ravenna, Ohio. Instructors of the U.S. Army arrive on the 26th. Personnel to man the guns of the 9th Hy Bty of Halifax should arrive on the 26th also. . . .

MARCH 21ST, 1942

.... At 1300 hours all Japs, (men, women and children) left by Special CNR Train en route to Vancouver. . . .

MARCH 24TH, 1942

.... At 1030 hours advice was received from the CNR that a special train is coming in today at 1700 hours with the 8" guns. At 1800 hours 2 — 8" RR guns arrived with three other steel box cars, presumably fire control car, and two ammunition cars. . . .

²³ U.S.T. — United States Transport.

²⁴ Cmdg. — Commanding. Diarist is referring to G.O.C.-in-C., Pacific Command.

²⁵ Fld. — Field guns.

²⁶ O.O. — Or more properly, D.O.O. — District Ordnance Officer, Military District No. XI (British Columbia).

MARCH 25TH, 1942

.... Major F. D. Robbins U.S. Ordnance Corps and four sergeants arrived to carry out installation of the 8" guns. At 1700 hours AA Guns were temporarily placed and ready for action. . . .

MARCH 27TH, 1942

.... At 0130 hours four officers and 72 other ranks of the 9th Hy Bty RCA arrived to man the 2 — 8" guns which arrived last week. . . .

APRIL 5TH, 1942

.... At 1100 hours approximately 350 U.S. Soldiers arrived by special train. The CNSS Prince George has been chartered for the trip north to an undisclosed destination. . . .

APRIL 6TH, 1942

.... At 1620 hours Lieut. R. Thistle, AIO²⁷ and Naval and RCAF Security Officers to Ketchikan by plane for conference with American Liaison Officers.

APRIL 8TH, 1942

.... The C.O. had a meeting with all the Civic Heads on the question of the late excessive use of liquor in our fair city. The CO satisfied them that the troops were the least to blame for the trouble.

APRIL 9TH, 1942

.... Major Rycroft and Evitt on reces to determine sites of guns and it has now been decided to site the 8-inch guns at Fairview Point, guns remaining on the Railway Mountings. Work has now commenced on the sites.

APRIL 10TH, 1942

.... Col. Harrington arrived (of the US Army) to look into the matter of accommodation and dock facilities for the future movement of their troops and supplies throughout this port. . . .

APRIL 12TH, 1942

.... Approx. 350 Negro Soldiers of the US Army and 50 cars of supplies arrived by special train en route to Alaska. At 2152 hours RCAF

²⁷ A.I.O. — Area Intelligence Officer.

Patrol reported seeing what was thought to be a small fishing craft with pole mast at 1745 hours in Dixon Entrance due south of Cape Chacon and North of Graham Island. On flying lower to investigate Observer reported craft disappeared. Without a doubt it was a submarine. All concerned warned.

APRIL 15TH, 1942

.... At 1420 hours the first of the 10,000 tons Cargo Vessels was launched at the local Dry Dock. It is named the "Fort Stikine."

APRIL 17TH, 1942

.... Wire was received from PC that US Army was not to advertise for labour under their name but they were to use us as their advertisee. (They don't want them to know they are here, I guess).

APRIL 27TH, 1942

.... At 1950 hours received a message from OC Alaska forces at Ft. Richardson that a sub had been sighted at south end of Prince of Wales Island and an hour later at south entrance of Clarence Strait.

APRIL 28TH, 1942

.... Two more Bofors guns arrived making a total of six now in the Area.

MAY 1ST, 1942

.... Wire received from General Staff approving our recommendation for 25-pdr Bty at Verney Island and Tyee. Work is to proceed immediately. We are also to proceed with 8" Bty site at Fairview Point. . . .

MAY 11TH, 1942

.... Capt. O'Grady arrived in connection with organization of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers in this District. The U.S. Port Commander advises they are building a road to connect the highway with Port Edward.

MAY 13TH, 1942

.... At 2300 hours message received that submarine spotted and Sharks²⁸ and Navy were going out to attack.

²⁸ "Shark" aircraft.

MAY 20TH, 1942

... At 1500 hours wire received from DAQ advising that the HQ 14th Inf Bde, KORCs, Wpg. Grens.²⁹ and the 19th Fld Regt will arrive Terrace about June First. At 2100 hours a most secret message was received from Pacific Command stating that an attack on the Aleutians may be expected between now and the end of the month. . . .

MAY 22ND, 1942

... Advice received that the 14th Inf Bde will be in Terrace on June 1st.

MAY 24TH, 1942

... Good news for the Inf Bns here; they are to transfer all their H.D.s to another Battalion, which is entirely H.D.

MAY 27TH, 1942

... At 1545 hours advice received that 18 officers and 371 other ranks of the Midlands will arrive here 2nd June to complete their move. Party of Edmn Fus. off to head of Tuck Inlet and through to Georgetown on recce. . . .

MAY 29TH, 1942

... At 2130 hours word received that action may be expected in immediate future in the Aleutians and Alaska. . . .

MAY 31ST, 1942

... At 1700 hours wire received from Pacific Command stating that the U.S. Authorities expect an attack on the Aleutians which might include a raid on this Port. Two squadrons of R.C.A.F. planes are proceeding to Annette Island and we are sending two Bofors, ammunition and 1 officer and 32 other ranks for Aerodrome Protection. . . .

JUNE 1ST, 1942

... Lieut. C. E. Sine and 32 other ranks and two Bofors with operational ammunition of the 112th Light A.A. Bty RCA left by U.S. Scow in tow of U.S. Vessel at 0845 hours for Annette Island Landing Field in Alaska as protection for our Fighter Squadrons which are stationed there. These are the first Canadian Troops to be Stationed in Alaska. A consider-

²⁹ King's Own Rifles of Canada and Winnipeg Grenadiers.

able amount of confusion existed over this move. Various long distance telephone calls from Pacific Command and telegrams were contradictory and conflicting. At one time this detachment was to proceed to Yakutat, Alaska; then it was changed to Annette Island, then again they were to go to Annette for two days and then to Yakutat. . . .

JUNE 2ND, 1942

. . . . At 1640 hours Lt. Gen. K. Stuart, CGS⁸⁰, the QMG and staff arrived by plane for an inspection of the Defences. . . .

JUNE 3RD, 1942

. . . . At 1030 hours the R.C.A.F. advised us that they had received from their Headquarters a message stating that four bombers and fourteen fighters, Japanese, had attacked Dutch Harbour at 0900 hours (Pacific War Time) this morning. C.O. and CGS were immediately recalled from the forts. At 1130 hours confirmation of this information was received from Pacific Command. . . . At 2230 hours a wire was received from Pacific Command stating that the Japs had not attacked Juneau as previously reported. The R.C.N. here received word that the damage to Dutch Harbour had been slight. An Aircraft Carrier has been sighted 110 miles south of Dutch Harbour. From the general opinion it would appear that the raid on Dutch Harbour was in the nature of a reconnaissance. At 2230 hours a Blackout (Preliminary) was ordered for Prince Rupert by the Western Air Command. Lt.-Gen. K. Stuart, CGS, Maj. Gen. J. P. MacKenzie, QMG, have set up an office here and intend to stay if the Japs prove to be more progressive.

JUNE 4TH, 1942

. . . . Wire was received from Pacific Command that the report of a second raid and third on Dutch Harbour by the Japs was incorrect and was probably due to confusion of enemy radio interception. One enemy sea plane was downed at Dutch Harbour and at 2000 hours a wire was received from Pacific Command stating that the U.S. Navy had located a Jap Naval Force of two Destroyers, three Heavy Cruisers and one Aircraft Carrier . . . 110 miles from Dutch Harbour. . . .⁸¹

⁸⁰ Lt.-Gen. K. Stuart was Chief of the General Staff from December 1941 until December 1943. For a few months during the summer of 1942 he also acted as G.O.C.-in-C. until Major-General G. R. Pearkes was appointed early in September 1942 to replace Major-General R. O. Alexander who had left on 30 June 1942. The Q.M.G. (Quartermaster General) accompanying Stuart was Major-General J. P. Mackenzie.

⁸¹ This marked the beginning of the Battle of Midway, during which the Japanese

JUNE 5TH, 1942

... At 1730 hours the 9th Coast Bty RCA advised that the second 8" Railway gun was ready for action at Fairview... Blackout continues until further orders. Radio telephone is also out of service during blackouts.

JUNE 7TH, 1942

... Landline communication between our Signal Centre and Terrace commenced today. It is expected that W/T will soon be instituted... At 1530 hours the R.C.A.F. advised that they were sending out three Sharks to attack a submarine reported to be in Pierce Inlet, north of Portland Canal.

JUNE 9TH, 1942

... At 1330 hours one unidentified plane was heard high over the city. At 1345 hours R.C.A.F. station advised us that eight unidentified planes are flying in this direction from over the QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS. At 1403 hours Air Raid Warning "RED" was received from the R.C.A.F. Operations Room. At 1404 the Air Raid Alarm was sounded. First Immediate Danger Alarm pulled in Canada. At 1406 hours all concerned notified. At 1410 hours TERRACE MILITARY CAMP was notified. At 1425 hours A.A. positions all manned and troops dispersed. At 1540 hours the R.C.A.F. advised that they have advised Western Air Command of the above warning and it will therefore not be necessary for us to notify Pacific Command. At 1545 hours the R.C.A.F. advised that they received from one of their observers the information that eight unidentified planes were seen proceeding in this direction and that they were definitely not our planes... At 1620 the "ALL CLEAR" was sounded on advice from the R.C.A.F. Operations Room...

JUNE 10TH, 1942

... There are now fourteen Bofors A.A. Guns stationed in PRINCE RUPERT....

JUNE 12TH, 1942

... Wire received from Pacific Command that a Task force of Japs, two destroyers, three heavy cruisers and six transports had been sighted off

forces were soundly beaten. The Japanese did gain bases on the Aleutian chain of islands, however. Attu and Kiska were seized on 6-7 June, and by the spring of 1943 over 6,000 Japanese troops occupied the two islands.

Kiska Island which is at the extreme end of the Aleutian Group. The U.S. Army Air Corps had been ordered to attack. . . .³²

JUNE 17TH, 1942

. . . . An old chap brought in an Atlas that he had found in a Japanese junk pile today. It had marks and routes marked in red ink along the ALEUTIANS down the PACIFIC COAST as far as SAN FRANCISCO. Circles were made around ports such as DUTCH HARBOUR, PRINCE RUPERT, SITKA, VANCOUVER, VICTORIA, SEATTLE and SAN FRANCISCO. . . .

JUNE 19TH, 1942

. . . . At 1030 hours it was reported that the SS "General Gorgas", a U.S. Transport was attacked by a Jap sub twice at position 56° W 147°N. . . .

JUNE 20TH, 1942

. . . . At 1130 hours a wire was received from Pacific Command stating that the SS "Fort Camosun" had been torpedoed at position 47° 14' N 125° 20' W near the mouth of the COLUMBIA RIVER. . . .

JUNE 21ST, 1942

. . . . At 1700 hours a wire received from Pacific Command that Estevan Point had been shelled at 1025 hours last night for forty minutes. Approximately thirty shells of 6-inch calibre were fired. . . . This is the first enemy action on the British Columbia Coast. Estevan Point is located on the West Coast of Vancouver Island in Nootka Sound. . . .

³² American forces were unaware of the occupation of the islands by the Japanese until four days after the event.